

Chapter 8

Sharing the Road with Others

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It is important for a motorist to remember that he/she is not the only one using the roadways. From people to animals to other types of vehicles, it is a motorist's responsibility to know how to safely share the road with others.

PEOPLE

PEDESTRIANS

Pedestrians are the second largest category of motor vehicle deaths and injuries in New Jersey. Children and older people are often victims of traffic accidents.

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Transportation Fatality Analysis Reporting System reported 4,784 total pedestrian deaths. New Jersey had 171 pedestrian deaths in 2006. Unfortunately, many of the measures that make roads safer for motorists, such as large medians and wide shoulders, make those roads more treacherous for pedestrians. Vehicle-pedestrian collisions have a five percent fatality rate if the car is going 20 mph, but the rate jumps to 85 percent at 40 mph.

Pedestrian activity is at its greatest in densely developed areas, such as cities and town centers, but it also is significant in neighborhoods and along and across suburban roadways. Motorists should take special precautions to watch for pedestrians.

In most cases, pedestrians have the right-of-way at all intersections. There is a crosswalk at every intersection, even if it is not painted as such. This is known as an "unmarked crosswalk."

Motorists are prohibited from blocking the crosswalk when stopped at a red light or stop sign. A motorist must not stop with a portion of his/her vehicle in the crosswalk area. When a motorist blocks a crosswalk, it forces pedestrians to go around a vehicle, putting them in danger.

A motorist must stop and remain stopped for a pedestrian who is crossing at a crosswalk (marked or unmarked) until the pedestrian completes his/her crossing, unless traveling along the half of the roadway on the other side of a safety island from the pedestrian. Motorists who fail to yield to pedestrians or who overtake and pass vehicles that are stopped for pedestrians are subject to a \$100 fine and up to 15 days in jail (N.J.S.A. 39:4-36).

Never pass a vehicle stopped at a crosswalk (N.J.S.A. 39:4-36). This frequently causes severe injury or death to pedestrians, especially if the passing vehicle is traveling at a high speed. When stopping for a crosswalk on a multi-lane road, a motorist should stop about 30 feet before a crosswalk to avoid blocking visibility of a motorist in the second lane.

Motorists should watch for signs that mark special hazard areas, such as school zones, bus stops, playgrounds, parks and schools, where children are most likely to play or cross the streets. Children chasing a ball, for instance, give no thought to traffic. Small children are hard to see. Always watch for movement around parked vehicles.

Motorists should drive cautiously along roadways with on-street parking, as pedestrians may appear from between parked vehicles. Motorists traveling at lower speeds will have a greater ability to stop the vehicle and avoid potential conflicts with pedestrians.

Pedestrians and joggers should always face oncoming traffic and use sidewalks when available. They should cross at crosswalks only on the proper signal, look all ways before crossing, avoid crossing between parked vehicles, and at night, wear light-colored or reflective clothes and carry a white handkerchief or a light. It is not a good practice to wear headphones while walking or jogging near the roadway.

At night, motorists should watch for anyone walking along a highway and exercise due caution. None of the above absolves motorists from their duty to be extra vigilant in watching for pedestrians on the roadway.

Always yield to pedestrians. Be extra careful at intersections, particularly when making an allowed right turn on red. Motorists are required to yield to pedestrians who have the right-of-way within a crosswalk and to those who are crossing at an intersection. Be alert for pedestrians when making turns and entering and exiting driveways, parking lots and alleys.

▼ MATURE DRIVERS

One out of four New Jersey residents is 55 years or older. This ratio is expected to increase in the coming years. Mobility by driving is essential for this group.

Normal physical changes are part of the aging process. Mature drivers may experience declines in vision, hearing, reaction time and flexibility.

They can continue to drive safely by learning to compensate for these changes by following these important tips:

- Choose the time and the road that is best suited to driving ability.
- Choose a well-lit roadway for night driving.
- Stay alert when driving to compensate for any declines in vision, hearing or reaction time.
- Keep information on public transportation, taxi services and senior ride programs current and on hand in case an alternative transportation mode is needed.
- Share driving time with another person.
- Keep driver license current.
- Enroll in a defensive-driving or driving refresher course.
- Visit an ophthalmologist, optometrist or optician annually for a vision and eyeglasses check. Have eyes checked immediately if vision problems are experienced.
- Ask a doctor or pharmacist if the medications taken can affect driving.
- Never drive if taking any medications and consuming alcohol.
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages in any quantity and drive.
- Accept the judgment of family and friends about driving skills. Ask them to rate skills, and improve or discontinue driving if there is a concern for safety.

Note: Retesting for drivers may be required after a serious collision or medical problem.

▼ VISUALLY CHALLENGED PERSONS

The law is very specific that vehicles must give the right-of-way when any of the following crosses any highway or intersection: blind persons who use a predominantly white or metallic cane, blind persons accompanied by a guide dog, or a guide dog instructor engaged in instructing a guide dog. A motorist must stop when he/she sees a person with a white or metallic "colored" cane or with a guide dog. All motorists must comply with this law (N.J.S.A. 39:4-37.1).

VEHICLES

MOTORCYCLES

Be alert! The same laws governing other motor vehicles also govern motorcycles. However, due to the smaller size of motorcycles, extra caution should be used when sharing the road.

Never follow motorcycles too closely. A motorist should be aware of slippery, sloped or uneven surfaces and grooves and gratings in the roadway, which present potential hazards for motorcycle riders. Objects on the roadway also present a challenge. Motorcyclists must be ready to react to these situations differently than motorists driving passenger vehicles. This is why it is important to leave plenty of space between an automobile and a motorcycle.

When passed by a motorcycle, a motorist should maintain his/her speed and position. Allow plenty of room for the motorcycle to complete the pass and resume proper lane position.

A motorist's failure to detect and recognize motorcycles in traffic is the most common cause of motorcycle collisions.

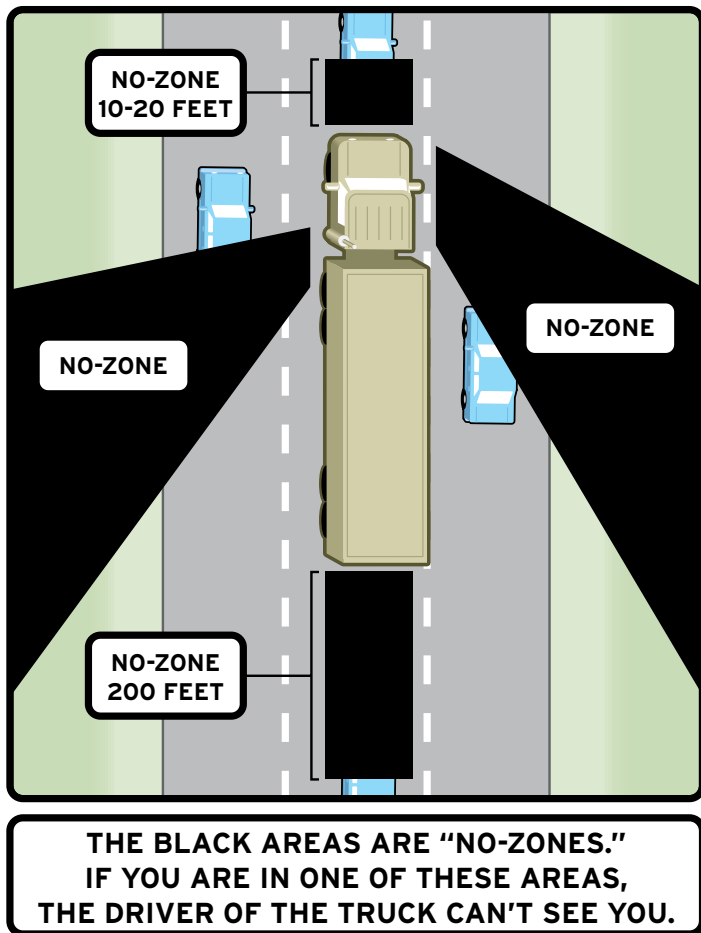
For more information on motorcycle safety, visit **www.njridesafe.org**. Copies of the New Jersey Motorcycle Manual may be obtained at any motor vehicle agency, online at **www.njmvc.gov** or by calling **(888) 486-3339**.

TRUCKS, TRACTOR-TRAILERS AND BUSES

A motorist should always use caution when driving alongside trucks. Sharing the road with larger vehicles can be safe if a motorist knows the limitations of these vehicles regarding visibility, required stopping distance and maneuverability. When passing a large truck or bus, it is important to remember that there are several no-zones (blind spots) in which the motorist cannot see other vehicles. In addition, during bad weather, a truck can take as much as 25 percent longer to stop.

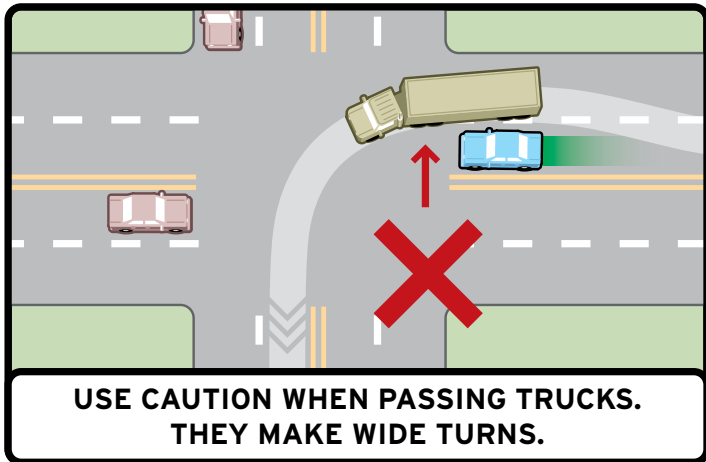
The no-zone principle

Avoid the area around trucks where vehicles disappear into blind spots. Do not move so close to a truck that the truck driver's ability to stop or maneuver effectively is restricted. The potential for a collision is increased when a motorist is riding in the no-zone. If the motorist of a large truck or bus cannot see another motorist's vehicle in the rearview or side-view mirrors, the vehicle is in a no-zone, or blind spot.



Rear no-zone

- Stay far behind a truck that is preparing to back up or is backing up. Never pass close behind a truck that is preparing to back up or is in the process of backing up. Because of their width, the trailers completely hide objects that suddenly come between them and a loading area. The area behind the truck is a no-zone (blind spot), not only for the truck driver but for other motorists as well.
- A motorist should increase following distance behind a truck or other large vehicle so its driver can spot a motorist's vehicle in the rearview mirrors. Never tailgate or remain sandwiched between trucks. A motorist should maintain a sizable space cushion between his/her vehicle and larger vehicles.
- Leave space when stopping at a light or sign behind a truck or bus, especially when facing uphill. The larger vehicle may roll backward slightly when starting.
- Give more road space to a truck driver who is making a wide turn. Because trucks are larger than other vehicles, their drivers may have to slow, back up or swing wide to negotiate a turn. They cannot see smaller vehicles directly behind or beside them. For example, a truck driver may have to swing wide to the left to make a right turn.



Front no-zone

- Maintain a consistent speed when passing. Do not pull in front of a truck when passing until the whole front of the truck can be seen in the rearview mirror. Always signal before changing lanes. Never pass a truck on the right.

Side no-zone

- Drive away from the long blind spots on the sides of trucks. If the motorist must quickly change lanes or make an emergency maneuver, a vehicle in this area will be in the way. Do not linger alongside a truck when passing.

Head-on no-zone

- A motorist should bear right when a large vehicle is traveling toward his/her vehicle from the opposite direction. This reduces wind turbulence between the motorist and the larger vehicle, and possibly prevents a sideswipe.

YIELDING TO SCHOOL AND COMMERCIAL BUSES

State law requires all non-emergency vehicles to yield the right-of-way to buses re-entering traffic after dropping off or picking up bus passengers. However, once the bus is back in the normal flow of traffic, motorists are not required to yield the right-of-way to buses changing lanes. Bus operators are required to drive in a safe and responsible manner. The yield law was enacted to improve safety on the state's roadways. Violations of this law carry a fine of not less than \$50 or more than \$200, up to 15 days in jail or both a fine and a jail term (N.J.S.A. 39:4-87.1).

MOPEDS

Motorized bicycles, or mopeds, are low-speed, two-wheeled vehicles with pedals, intended for limited use on public roadways. Moped drivers may not exceed 25 mph, must follow all traffic signs and signals and drive on the right side of the road with the flow of traffic.

A motorist should always be alert for mopeds, which are smaller than motorcycles and harder to see. Moped drivers have the same rights and responsibilities as those driving other motor vehicles. A copy of the New Jersey Moped Manual may be obtained at any motor vehicle agency, online at **www.njmvc.gov** or by calling **(888) 486-3339** within New Jersey or **(609) 292-6500** out of state.

BICYCLES, SKATEBOARDS AND INLINE SKATES

A motorist should always leave plenty of room when following or passing a bicyclist, skateboarder or inline skater. Under New Jersey law, each of these individuals has the same rights and responsibilities as a moving motor vehicle.

While bicycles ridden after dark must have front and rear lights and a rear reflector, these illumination devices may be hard for a motorist to see. A motorist should always remain alert to the presence of smaller vehicles.

When turning right, motorists should be aware of bicyclists, skateboarders or inline skaters. Before turning, the motorist should wait until the intersection clears. Under New Jersey law, motorists signaling a right turn must yield to bicyclists, skateboarders or inline skaters moving through an intersection.

To turn left, a bicyclist, skateboarder or inline skater may choose to use traffic lanes to turn as a vehicle would. A motorist should be aware that a bicyclist, skateboarder or inline skater may ride on the right edge of the turn lane.

MOTORIZED SCOOTERS (N.J.S.A. 39:4-14.12 through 39:4-14.15; N.J.S.A. 39:1-1)

A motorized scooter is a miniature motor vehicle. Although it is illegal for these vehicles to be driven on any public road or sidewalk, except on designated municipal or county property, motorists must be very alert if these types of vehicles are present. Motorized scooters are extremely hard to see.

Motorized scooters must be registered in the municipality or county where the owner resides and must be insured. No one under the age of 12 (the age determined by a municipality or county) is permitted to operate a motorized scooter.

Examples of a motorized scooter include but are not limited to:

- Pocket bikes
- Super pocket bikes
- Scooters
- Mini-scooters
- Sport scooters
- Mini-choppers
- Mini-motorcycles
- Motorized skateboards
- Other vehicles with motors not manufactured in compliance with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards and which have no permanent Federal Safety Certification stickers affixed to the vehicle by the original manufacturer

The following are not motorized scooters:

- Electric personal mobility-assisting devices
- Motorized bicycles or low-speed vehicles
- Motorized wheelchairs
- Mobility scooters or similar mobility-assisting devices used by persons with physical disabilities or persons whose ambulatory mobility has been impaired by age or illness

▼ **INDIVIDUALS WITH A MOBILITY-RELATED DISABILITY**

State law allows individuals with a mobility-assisted disability to operate certain motorized scooters on public streets, with a posted speed limit in excess of 25 mph but not more than 35 mph, if local government determines that the scooter does not pose a danger to safety and the flow of traffic. The motorized scooter may only have a maximum speed capability of no more than 15 mph (N.J.S.A. 39:4-14.12 through 39:4-14.15). The following are not permitted for mobility-related disabilities:

- Pocket bikes
- Super pocket bikes
- Scooters
- Mini-scooters
- Sport scooters
- Mini-choppers
- Mini-motorcycles
- Motorized skateboards

The motorized scooter must be registered with the municipality in which the operator resides and must be insured. After registering the motorized scooter with the municipality, the owner may apply for a placard or sticker from the MVC.

▼ **LOW-SPEED VEHICLES** (N.J.S.A. 39:4-31.1 through 39:4-31.5)

A low-speed vehicle (LSV) is a four-wheeled vehicle with an attainable speed of more than 20 mph, but no more than 25 mph on a paved surface. It cannot be powered by gas or diesel fuel and must comply with federal safety standards. Motorists should be alert when these types of vehicles are present, as they may be difficult to see.

The following guidelines must be observed when driving a low-speed vehicle:

- LSVs may not be driven on roadways with speed limits that exceed 25 mph. (In limited cases, if deemed appropriate by a municipality, county or the State DOT, LSVs may be permitted on roadways with speed limits that do not exceed 35 mph).

- Watch for and abide by road signs prohibiting use, even on lower speed roads.
- LSVs may not be used as modified golf carts.
- LSVs must have a 17-digit Vehicle Identification Number.
- A motorist must have a valid Class D license to operate an LSV.
- The LSV must be properly registered and insured.
- Child restraints in LSVs must meet the same standards as those used in passenger vehicles.
- A motorist may lease or rent LSVs that are properly titled, registered and insured for temporary use.
- An LSV may be registered in the name of an individual, business or government entity but may not be used as a commercial vehicle.
- LSV drivers are subject to the same violations as other vehicles (except for the regular inspection requirements).
- All LSVs shall have a safety information decal provided by the manufacturer on the rear of the vehicle.
- If the LSV has only one license plate, it should be placed on the rear of the vehicle.
- LSVs must meet federal and state requirements.

Federal Requirements (49 CFR 571.500)

Low speed vehicles cannot exceed 25 mph and must be equipped with:

- Headlamps
- Front and rear turn signal lamps
- Tail lamps
- Stop lamps
- Red reflex reflectors: one on each side as far to the rear as possible and one on the rear of the vehicle
- Exterior mirror mounted: on the motorist's side of the vehicle and either an exterior mounted on the passenger's side or an interior rearview mirror
- Parking brake
- Windshield that meets federal safety requirements
- Vehicle Identification Number
- Seat belts

State Requirements (N.J.S.A. 39:4-31.2)

LSVs operated on any public road or highway in the state shall be maintained in proper condition and comply with equipment requirements and standards:

- Adequate brakes to control the movement of the vehicle
- Odometer
- Speedometer
- Original manufacturer's VIN die-stamped on the body and/or frame, engine or motor of the vehicle
- Safety information decal provided by the manufacturer must be in a conspicuous place on the rear of the vehicle displaying "25 MPH Vehicle"

SNOWMOBILES AND ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES (ATVs)

(N.J.S.A. 39:3C-1 through 39:3C-31)

Motorists must be aware of the presence of legally registered snowmobiles and ATVs that may attempt to cross certain roadways. While it is illegal for these types of vehicles to ride on public roadways with other vehicles, they are permitted to cross certain roadways when safety permits. Operators of snowmobiles and ATVs must maintain a proof of insurance and display the vehicle's registration at all times. Copies of the New Jersey Snowmobile or ATV brochures may be obtained online at **www.njmvc.gov**.

ANIMALS

Animals often dart onto roads or streets. Trying to avoid them often causes collisions. By swerving, the vehicle may hit something else or be hit by another vehicle from behind. The best defense against such accidents is to watch for animals on both sides of the road ahead and be prepared for unexpected movement.

HORSEBACK RIDERS

Horse-drawn vehicles and horseback riders have the same rights and responsibilities as do motor vehicles when using public roadways (N.J.S.A. 39:4-25.1). Motorists should approach or pass a horse or horse-drawn vehicle with care at a maximum speed of 25 mph and observe the request, either by hand signal or otherwise, of a person riding a horse or driving a horse-drawn vehicle in the opposite direction for the motorist to stop his/her motor vehicle and remain stationary for as long as it takes the horse to pass (N.J.S.A. 39:4-72).

Horse-drawn vehicles and horseback riders may not use certain limited-access highways and must ride with traffic, keeping as far to the right as possible. Other rules apply. Speeding and illumination rules apply. A light must be displayed on the back of the horse-drawn vehicle:

- 30 minutes after sunset until 30 minutes before sunrise
- If visibility is 500 feet or less
- When encountering fog, mist, smoke or other factors that reduce visibility (N.J.S.A. 39:4-25)

